



# TOWN OF WATERTOWN

## Zoning Board of Appeals

Administration Building  
149 Main Street  
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Melissa M. Santucci Rozzi, Chairperson  
David Ferris, Clerk  
Christopher H. Heep, Member  
John G. Gannon, Member  
Kelly Donato, Member  
Neeraj Chander, Alternate

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Louise Civetti, Clerk to the ZBA

### MINUTES

On Thursday evening, May 28, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber on the second floor of the Administration Building, the Zoning Board of Appeals held a public hearing. In attendance: Melissa Santucci Rozzi, *Chair*; David Ferris, *Clerk*; Christopher Heep, *Member*; John G. Gannon, *Member*; Kelly Donato, *Member*. *Absent*: Neeraj Chander, *Alternate Member*. Also Present: Steve Magoon, Director, Mike Mena, Zoning Officer, and Gideon Schreiber, Sr. Planner.

The Chair opened the meeting, introduced the board and staff, and reviewed the agenda.

Member Ferris read the legal notice:

*"56-60 & 57 Irving Street and 122, 150, 160, 162 & 204 rear Arsenal Street-B. Henry, Greystar GP II, LLC, 8405 Greensboro Drive, Suite 950, McLean, VA 22102 herein requests the Zoning Board of Appeals grant a Special Permit with Site plan Review in accordance with Watertown Zoning Ordinance §9.03, §9.05, §9.07, & §9.08 subject to §5.01.1(k)(2), Mixed Use; §5.04, Table of Dimensional Regulations; §5.05(i) FAR; and 5.07 Affordable Housing so as to construct approximately 282 residential units (36 affordable) and 11,000 s.f. retail/commercial space with 465 parking at the former M. J. Pirolli & Sons site. The project will also involve the removal of 8 existing structures. I-3 (Industrial), LB (Limited Business) and R.75 (Residential) Zoning Districts. ZBA-2015-07"*

The Applicant's Representative, Christian Regnier, introduced the project team and described the scope of work proposed and was requesting a Special Permit for the project described above.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked if there were any comments from the public and opened the hearing up to public comment.

Council President Mark Sideris and Councilmember Cecilia Lenk spoke in favor of the project noting that the project had changed significantly from the original proposal and was amendable to incorporating the pending Design Guidelines and comments from the public. The Representatives were pleased with the incorporation of a public park across the Irving Street, from the project, the additional retail and felt the project would bring a sense of community to the now industrial area. Councilmember Anthony Palomba submitted written comments supporting the project with the following comments/requests: incorporate "rotating" public art, include community space (public), break up the façade at the back of the building(s), design the parking garage to suite other uses should the number of planned parking spaces not be needed, and to engage the community in the planning of the public park space.

One community member Elodia Thomas, spoke in favor of the project and thanked the development team for an honest and thoughtful design process and engaging the community throughout the design of the project.

David Gamble, the Town's Urban and Architectural Design Consultant spoke regarding the consistency of the project with the pending Design Guidelines. Mr. Gamble commended the development team for volunteering to be the test case for the town's Design Guidelines and acknowledged the substantial change(s) incorporated into the project from its initial submittal in September 2014.

Member David Ferris asked about the number of entry doors into the project and where they were located? Ferris was also concerned about the overuse of some of the proposed building materials and asked why the proposed trees were grouped by type, rather than spread more variety throughout? The developer responded that the purpose of the tree planting was for symmetry and that additional trees could be incorporated at the westerly garage entrance (corner of) and along the northerly side of the garage, near the entrance.

Member Kelly Donato clarified the number of retail spaces proposed (3), their projected uses for the spaces and asked if the commercial parking would be separated from the residential spaces in the garage. The developer stated that they do not have any confirmed leases yet, but were going to be looking for active, retail service uses like, cafes, restaurants, salons, and/or drycleaner type uses. The developer also confirmed that there would be clear delineation between the residential and commercial parking spaces.

Member Christopher Heep asked whether the current "market" could support such a large project given the development that has occurred in the Pleasant Street District and the recent project approved just east of this site. Heep also asked about how the proposed park would be maintained (town or developer) and why more retail was not located at the westerly end of the project, along Arsenal Street? The developer responded that the other projects are at or near capacity and the demand remains. Additionally the rents being collected by new projects would support this development moving forward. The park is currently intended to be owned and maintained by the developer and the developer responded to the lack of retail space at the westerly side of site by stating that, they thought there was enough square footage being provided by the development which could be supported given the number of units and the other commercial development in the area. The developer did note that some faux retail space is being provided which includes a cyber-café and a fitness center for residence of the development.

Member John Gannon asked whether the project would be built in phases and what amount of population is expected to be generated by the development (218 units) and staff from the commercial spaces. Gannon also asked what parts of the project would be accessible by the public and if the existing billboard would be removed? The developer stated that there is anticipated to be 2-3 people per unit and that the number of staff is still to be determined. The areas of the project open to the general public would be the courtyards, retail, and connections through the site. The developer also stated that the billboard would be removed.

Chair Santucci Rozzi expressed concern regarding the bright orange and green colors shown for portions of the buildings and way finding signage for the site given all the access points for vehicles and pedestrians alike. Chair Santucci Rozzi also expressed concern regarding the lack of connection of the rear drive from Irving Street to the easterly portion of the site and how the traffic and mitigation monitoring will be reported and reviewed.

The developer responded to the color concerns by stating that the colors are intended to be accent areas and to brighten up areas of the project that would typically be shaded by the various "jogs" of the building, but can look at other options. The developer would include a comprehensive way finding plan and stated that the split in the driveway/road at the rear of the project was based on staff and community comments to direct most of the vehicle traffic to Arsenal Street. The developer also stated that they would look at an

alternative timing for the traffic monitoring and reporting schedule and report back to the Board with a new plan.

Chair Santucci Rozzi and Members Ferris and Heep had additional comments including accessible parking provided in the parking garage, whether a door would be added for exterior exiting/entry of the cyber-café, parking spaces in the central court yard, and lastly Member Heep wanted to ensure that there would be a condition that the developer or property owner would be responsible for maintenance of the proposed park lot in perpetuity.

Steve Magoon, Director prompted the Board to comment on the connecting bridge and the four support columns and asked the developer to talk about the bridge and its design. The developer indicated that the span is roughly 40 feet and the area separates the court yard and the rear of the site. Member Ferris was in support of the current design and number of supports and suggested that the bridge not have to appear separate from the building and stand out from the rest of the project's architecture.

David Gamble, the town's consultant, responded to Member Ferris' comment and strongly encouraged the elimination of the number of support columns with a alternative design that would not require the number of supports. Member Heep and Gannon also had concerns about the columns. Mr. Gamble expressed that that intent was for the bridge to stand out and encouraged the developer to "get it right." Member Ferris reiterated that he felt the bridge did not need to be a "jewel" and it is just his personal preference. Mr. Magoon felt that the columns took away from the openness of the passage way and less inviting for the public. The developer committed to looking at alternative and come back to the Board for review. Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner, stated that the Planning Board requested the bridge be redesigned.

Chair Santucci Rozzi requested a motion to continue the project to the June meeting. Member Gannon motioned for a continuance which was seconded and voted unanimously by the Board.

The meeting was then closed at 9:50 p.m. by unanimous vote of the Board.